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THE GREAT SINGERS OF THE LAST CENTURY.

At this period appeared an *artiste* of similar fame, Faustina Bordoni. She made her first appearance at Venice in 1716, and arrived in London in 1725. Cuzzoni was now in the zenith of her glory. Faustina, by no means her equal, was yet possessed of a very fine voice. Her range, however, was comparatively small, while her powers of expression were not striking. What voice she had she managed with unquestionable discretion, and her execution was distinct if not at times brilliant. Her throat seemed possessed of an immediate power of adaptation to any sort of measure, and transitions cost her no more trouble apparently than they would an instrument of music. The *Tremolo*, which she could produce in unrivalled beauty, she is supposed to have been the first to employ. On the stage she was quite at home in all characters, and ever delighted the audience with her personal charms and most expressive countenance. To compare her with Cuzzoni would be out of the question. Faustina, however, possessed excellences not found in Cuzzoni's singing. In fact, they ought not to be contrasted, being of entirely different styles. But some of their hearers thought proper to institute comparisons between them.

The consequence of this was the formation among the opera-goers of a Faustina and a Cuzzoni party. Like as with Margherita de l'Epine and Mrs. Tofts, disturbances took place in the theatres, but the contending factions in the Cuzzoni and Faustina affair belonged rather to aristocratic circles. Cuzzoni was upheld by the Countess of Pembroke and Sir Robert Walpole, the latter a host in himself, while Faustina's leading supporters were the Countess of Burlington and Lady Delawarr. The presence of royalty could not prevent the often unseemly scenes which arose from the fury of partizanship. We are told in the London *Journal* of that date that the combatants "proceeded at length to the melodious use of catcalls and other accompaniments." A poet of the day avenged the insulted majesty of music in the following lines:

"Old poets sing that beasts did dance
Whenever Orpheus played;
So, to Faustina's charming voice
Wise Pembroke's asses brayed."

This state of things being found to injure the interests of the opera, the managers resolved to get rid of one or other of the two ladies. In this way these vocalists would for the future be prevented, at least in London, from coming, as they had once before at an evening party, to actual blows. Lady Pembroke made Cuzzoni swear she would never accept a smaller salary than Faustina. The directors of the opera persisted in offering Cuzzoni a guinea less than her rival, and the result was the departure of the former from our country. Faustina followed a few years subsequently, and met Cuzzoni abroad, where they became quite reconciled. Faustina's lot, after leaving London, was prosperous, and in this respect presents a forcible contrast to the melancholy career of Cuzzoni. Faustina married the celebrated Hasse, who derived important assistance from his wife in managing the Dresden opera. Faustina, after fifteen years of undisputed sovereignty, was at last laid on the shelf in consequence of the appearance of another charming songstress, Regina Valentini. She is more generally known as Mingotti, from having married an old man of that name, manager of the Dresden theatre. He placed his bride under the tuition of the well-known Porpora. This put the crowning stroke to the excellent musical education she had received when inmate of a convent of the Ursulines at Gratz in Silesia. Mingotti rose rapidly into favor, and evoked genuine admiration, even that of the almost superannuated Faustina. Still there was

a party raised against her, but she prevailed over all opposition. So complete was her triumph that the English minister at the Court of Dresden, Sir Charles Williams, once publicly apologized to her for having ever expressed a doubt respecting her abilities. She left Dresden and visited Naples, Madrid, and London. In the last city she created quite a sensation, and excited, like Cuzzoni, feuds among the nobility.

Mingotti was induced on the retirement, from bankruptcy, of Vaneschi, manager of the London opera, to embark along with Giardini, a great violin-player, in the undertaking. Like many others they were brought to ruin. Mingotti lost the fortune she had accumulated, and having left England in despair, settled finally at Munich. In her prime she was regarded as the first singer in Europe, and received offers of employment at all the chief Continental theatres. With a superb voice was united a brilliant execution. Afraid of no passage, however intricate, she would come off splendidly victorious in the performance of the most difficult opera. Hasse, who was jealous of her on account of the waning powers of his wife, Faustina, used to compose songs which would expose the weak notes—as he was envious enough to consider them—of Mingotti's voice. But the malicious scheme of the old fox always proved abortive. Along with unequalled vocalization in every different style, Mingotti combined a superior knowledge of music and language. She spoke, German, French, and Italian with so much ease as to render it impossible to decide which was her mother tongue. She was likewise acquainted with Spanish and English, and even understood Latin. Had she possessed in a higher degree that great passport to histrionic success, namely, a beautiful and voluptuous form, as well as feminine softness, she would have been as great a celebrity as most of the other singers of the eighteenth century. However, as a vocalist, and especially a musician, she seems to have surpassed them all. Had she sung at the modern opera, she would have elicited, if not admiration, certainly unbounded applause.

The next singer we shall mention is one which most have heard of, Caterina Gabrielli. Unlike Mingotti, Gabrielli was possessed of rare beauty; and were it not for a very capricious and uncertain temper, it was said by one who was acquainted with her, that she would have dealt out a too widely diffused destruction amongst mankind. As it was, every one in Europe seemed smitten with her charms. She is described by a writer of a book of travels in Sicily and Malta as "the most dangerous Siren of modern times." Her singing was transcendent, so much so as totally to abash all who appeared with her on the stage. On one occasion she exerted herself—which, indeed, she would not always do, often merely humming her songs, *i. e. sotto voce*, as the Italians say—and the result was, that the principal male singer abandoned all hope of future fame, and bursting into tears, ran off behind the scenes! Gabrielli's progress through Europe was one uninterrupted ovation. Her musical conquests were as immediate and decisive as the military exploits of the imperial general who wrote to the Roman Senate the despatch, *Veni, Vidi, Vici*. Gabrielli's success being in defiance of her impetuous, uncertain, and insolent disposition, her vocal powers must have been beyond all praise. Many expedients were adopted to neutralize her caprice. That which was found to answer the purpose best was to place some favored suitor—and of suitors she had many—in a prominent position in front of her in the pit. This, at first a fortunate device, soon lost its efficacy. She had, however, many redeeming qualities; amongst others that of being charitable. She could gratify her benevolent impulses out of the high payments she demanded and received for her professional services. Catherine II., who had invited her to St. Petersburg, inquired of Gabrielli her terms. "Five

thousand ducats," was the reply. "Five thousand ducats!" rejoined the Empress; "why none of my field-m Marshals are in receipt of such a sum." Her Majesty had better ask some of her field-m Marshals to sing," observed Gabrielli. The money was paid, and Gabrielli had the court and the whole city in ecstasy. This was something, because the opera at this time was well supplied through the discrimination and enterprise of the queen, who employed such musical directors as Galuppi, Cimarosa, and Paisiello.

In the midst of these triumphs, Gabrielli was solicited to visit London. She was not at first anxious to do so; alleging as a reason, that with the English—they were a nation so ferocious—her inveterate habit of caprice would cost her her life. She felt that it was scarcely safe to venture among a people who, if enraged, would, as she said, murder her. There were times when, really sick and unable to sing, she was thought to be wayward. The English, no more than foreigners, ascribing it to indisposition, would inflict summary vengeance for her caprice. Mingotti was accustomed to exclaim, that the people in London could not understand any human being to be seized with a fever, a cold, or a toothache, except a singer. Gabrielli, however, overcame her apprehension, and visited London. The great things that were expected of her, from the fame she had achieved on the Continent, created an exaggerated standard of perfection, and when she failed to reach this, people in their disappointment did not fully award her her due. Gabrielli, besides, was not actually young, though she looked so. Her voice—though exquisitely sweet—not being powerful, was not calculated to please those who hitherto had been astonished by the wonderful organs of Cuzzoni and Farinelli.

Gabrielli, however, made a great impression on society on account of the polish of her manners and the extent of her information. All this was the achievement of genius, for she was the daughter of a cardinal's cook, and derived from this circumstance the soubriquet of "La Couchetina," which, as she ascended the ladder of fame, she contrived to expunge from her armorial bearings.

It is sufficient to mention, without dwelling upon them, the names of Durastanti, Senesino, and Benedetti (a mere *charlatan*). The first two were principal singers of the company formed by Handel for the Royal Academy. Senesino came after Nicolini, and was a good actor, with a sweet and powerful *contralto* voice. But a supereminent singer, and perhaps the greatest performer of his own or any other age, remains yet to be noticed, the famous Farinelli. This title, said to have been received from the circumstance of his father having been a flour-merchant, in point of fact, arose from his becoming a *protégé* of the Farina family. Carlo Broschi, his proper name, was born at Andria, in the Neapolitan district, in 1705. He, like so many able singers of the time, was a pupil of Porpora's. This distinguished preceptor, observing Farinelli's extraordinary vocal powers, paid him unusual attention: nor did the disciple disappoint his careful training. So early as seventeen years of age he evinced those unrivalled qualities which afterwards raised him to the rank of the first singer in Europe. His success commenced at Rome, when he sung the celebrated song with an *obligato* accompaniment for the trumpet. In sustaining power of voice he far eclipsed the performer on the trumpet. After visiting different cities with undiminished popularity, more especially Vienna, he came to London about 1734, and was engaged by his old master, Porpora, to perform at Lincoln's Inn Fields in opposition to the opera under Handel.

It is a curious fact in relation to Handel, when he went abroad to embody a staff of singers, that he chose Senesino in preference to Farinelli. The folly of the selection was quickly

apparent; Farinelli was able to command an enormous salary, and became quite the rage of London. The fashionable world, in its efforts at homage, really seemed to have gone mad. It was regarded as an essential qualification in society to have heard Farinelli sing. Every one appeared to vie with his neighbor in heaping the most extravagant presents upon him. Those who are familiar with Hogarth's "Rake's Progress" may remember one engraving which is intended to ridicule the Farinelli mania. The matchless painter of the foibles and profligacy of human nature holds up to reprobation the piece of blasphemy of which some lady had been guilty, when, in order to attest her enthusiasm after having heard Carlo Brochi, she cried out, "One God and one Farinelli!" The town, however grew in a manner tired, not of Farinelli, but of the repetition of his performances. There is always," says Colley Cibber, in his well-known apology, "such a rage for novelty at the opera that within these two years we have seen even Farinelli sing to an audience of five-and-thirty-pounds." Having stayed in London about three years, he left England with the intention of returning the year following.

(To be Continued.)

"A FEW FACTS CONCERNING THE GRAND OPERA IN PARIS, AND THE SALARIES OF THE ARTISTS," is the title of a recent article in the *Neue Berliner Musik-Zeitung*. As it contains several facts not generally known, we condense it for the information of our readers.

The first managers of this famous art-institute were the Abbé Perrin and Cambert, the composer, associated with a certain Marquis Sourdée, who, from love of the occupation, was the machinist. At the end of a twelvemonth, during which the managers cleared 120,000 francs, the management was taken from them and given to Lulli, the Musical Director to Louis XIV. Lulli did quite as well as his predecessors, for he made a fortune of 800,000 francs in fifteen years. He was succeeded by his son-in-law, Francine, who leased out the speculation to several capitalists, from whom he afterwards took it back. By the king's command, the Dauphin's Master of the Horse was received into partnership with him in the year 1698. But the newcomer ruined him. The enterprise again passed into the hands of capitalist; was again resumed by Francine; was then carried on by a farmer of the customs, who was ruined, and then once more reverted to Francine, who was again unable to retain it. The king, who had himself hitherto been the principal director of his musical amusements, was so little edified by these continual changes, that he entrusted the management to the Chamberlain of the Palace. Matters then became involved in good earnest. The Duc d'Antin, brother of the Marquise de Montespan, was appointed stage-manager, but soon resigned the post. In 1728, a composer of the name of Destouches obtained the management, and disposed of it for the sum of 300,000 francs, to a M. Gruet, who was granted the patent for thirty years. He was however, deprived of it by a pre-emptory resolution of the Council of State, and his previous partners, the Count Saint-Gilles and the President Lebeuf, became his successors, but, after the lapse of ten months, were sent into banishment. In 1731, Prince Cavignon was Head Royal Inspector; in 1733, Captain de Thuret obtained Gruet's patent, and in eleven years was ruined in health and fortune. In 1744, Berger entered upon the management with the same result. Next came a M. Tréfontaine who, in sixteen months, left the manager's room for the Bastille. By Royal command the Municipality now undertook the management—fresh troubles. In the year 1778, the Grand Opera received for the first time a subvention of 80,000 francs, an enormous sum for the period, yet, after a twelvemonth's trial, the manager, De Visnus, would not retain office. In 1780,

Louis XVI. again leased out the theatre to the Municipality, and Berton, the composer, became manager. In 1790, the Municipality again undertook the burden, and, 1792, Franceur obtained the patent for thirty years. He was, however, deposed, no later than in 1793, and replaced by a committee consisting of the most violent *san-culottes*. Danton, Hébert, Henrion, etc., were now to be met, behind the scenes once frequented by crowds of elegant gentlemen.

One evening after Lannez, the singer had sung a patriotic ode, a man, who had been talking upon the stage to the above chiefs of the Revolution went up to him and said good-humoredly, "Citizen your ode is worth nothing. I know you did not write it; but I advise you for the future, before offering the Nation such stupid trash, to show it to me; and I will act as censor."—"Yes," observed one of the choristers present, "and our good-natured censor knows all about slashing and cutting." Lannez afterwards learned that his critic was the executioner of Paris, who spent his spare time at the Opera. The affrighted artist then perceived the hidden meaning of the chorister's words.

After the Reign of Terror; a manager was again appointed. During the Consulate, the Grand Opera was placed under the supervision of the Prefect of the Palace. In 1807, the High Chamberlain was director of the Theatres, and Picard manager, which he continued under Louis XVIII. also. In 1821, Habeneck was manager under the Chief Intendant and Minister of the Royal Household, Count de Blacas. After the Revolution of July, the Opera was made a private undertaking, and M. Véron became manager. In 1835, he gave up his place to M. Duponchel, and retired a millionaire. (It was during his management that *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots* were produced). After Duponchel came, in 1840, Leon Pillet, who, in seven years contracted debts to the amount of 513,000 francs. Duponchel then again undertook the management with M. Nestor Roqueplan. The latter remained as sole manager after the events of 1848.

On the establishment of the Empire, the Opera was once more placed under the control of the Minister of the Imperial Household. The last three "Imperial" managers have been: 1854, M. Csosnier; 1866, M. Alphonse Royer; and, 1862, M. Perrin, who is now the first private manager. Previously to 1789, the salaries of the principal singers amounted to 9000 francs, and those of the dancers to 7000; during the Revolution, they amounted to 20,000 and 15,000 with certain state-grants. Before 1789, a *figurante* received 700 francs, and during the Consulate, 1300. In the time of Louis XVI., the orchestra cost 46,000 francs, and in that of Napoleon I., 132,000. At the present day, the first singers cost annually sums of 60,000, 80,000, 120,000, or 160,000 francs each. The other expenses, amounting before 1789 to a few hundred thousand francs, and during the first Empire to a million and a half, have now risen to four millions.

MUSICAL GOSSIP,

Some doubt is expressed by London journals, respecting Grisi's failure at Mapleson's Opera House in "Lucrezia Borgia," whether it arose from her lack of tone or that she was victimized by a conspiracy to drive off the lyric stage a dangerous rival. It would appear that she was hissed in act second, after being gayed in the prologue, and her self-respect immediately dictated retirement from such a brutal public. She was induced by serious importunity, to finish her part, and then left at once, Her Majesty's Theatre, from which years before she retired to Covent Garden, and naturally incurred displeasure from those she left.

There is also material difference in expressed opinion respecting "Iphigenia in Tauris" and its performance at Mapleson's Opera, some writers denying merit to any parties there engaged

excepting Titiens and Santley, while the band and chorus are savagely cut up for inefficiency.

With regard to Mongini, the immensely robust tenor, widely different opinions are expressed and nearly all concede that he strives to astonish his public far more than he does to sing level and smooth like a true artist, sacrificing the music to get a strong note or two. Exaggeration seems to be chronic with him, and phrases well delivered are rare indeed.

"Ilma de Murska" still piques London into ecstatic frenzy with her very original style of acting, her daring floriture, and brilliant moments of passion. As "La Sonnambula" her great success appeared in the bed chamber scene and "Ah! non giunge." A poetaster gives the *Musical World* his rhapsodical idea of his bewildered fancy in respect to her and Titiens, praising both in one ride to Parnassus. Mongini's "Elvino" only excited in the scena and transposed, curtailed, aria. On 26th ult., De Murska appeared in Meyerbeer's "Dionora" with good support—with good success.

Mme. Vilda maintains her popularity at Gye's and being favored with excellent assistants in M. Sherrington and Naudin, she revived Norma's attraction. Her next role was to be "Lucrezia Borgia" and that would decide her fate with London dilettanti or critics.

Mlle. Lucca is credited with improvement as Selika, and Naudin admitted to be a decided improvement upon Wachtel, while the *World's* critic as decidedly praises "L'Africaine" for its enchanting wealth of melody; its unceasing flow of tune, in fact, the swan's song in his estimation.

Adelina Patti charmed London again, with "La Sonnambula," so that applause became a chronic malady. Her assistants were feeble and passed unheeded by, lost to sight and hearing in her brilliant atmosphere. So ecstatic are writers about her, that even last year's praise seems cold in comparison with present laudation, and she is declared to be vastly improved both in tone, execution and acting. Bagier who manages Les Italiens, managed to secure her for all next season there—if report speak truly.

Her sister Carlotta is reported from Milan as nearly recovered from recent illness, and to leave for London speedily.

"L'Africaine" has been produced at Barcelona with the greatest success. Mme. Kapp-Young performed Selika's part, Mme. Ruggero, that of Inez, Signor Morins that of Vasco, and Signor Boccolini enacted Nelusko. The manager and those artists were often called out enthusiastically.

Walter Bolton, the English baritone, is reported by the London *Musical World's* correspondent to have achieved several brilliant successes in Italy, and to sung with Marini in "Don Giovanni." His fine quality of voice, accurate method, perfect intonation, good accentuation, and natural manner, highly commended him to public favor wherever he performed.

Mlle. Artot and Signor Calzolari are great favorites at Vienna. So is Pocchini the *dansuse*.

Alberto Laurence is warmly praised by Turin, critics for his Nelusko, and styled a model for that role.

Roger has been singing at the Prague opera, but we do not learn what critics thought of that once great tenor and king of L'Academie.

Max Bruch's opera, "Die Lorely," has been successfully produced at Mayence, *on dit*, and Herr Urban is reported to have finished a grand three act opera called "Konradin," for Leipsic opera.

Gye's first operatic concert, in Lucca's name, at St. James' Hall, is queerly noticed by the *Musical World*, as but a few performers are spoken of, and others are left to imagination to describe. Nicolini, a *tenorino* from Les Italiens, pleased most in "La Donna mobile," and from what is said of him could hardly fill Edgardo's